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Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Ableist Language, Billy Hargrove & Maxine "Max" Mayfield Have a Good Relationship, Billy Hargrove Being an Asshole, Broken Bones, Gen, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Mild Blood, Mild Hurt/Comfort, Minor Injuries, Neil Hargrove's A+ Parenting, Sibling Bonding

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Summary:

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Billy licks his teeth and leans his head back against the seat.

“I raised you to be a man, not a moron.”

And Neil’s already aggravated so the smart thing to do would be to keep his trap shut, but sometimes Billy just can’t help himself.

“Are you sure?”

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Author's Note:

for the anon who sent me an ask on tumblr abt what max wanted to do in decretum. i won't be continuing that series, it's defo complete, but. here u go buddy. ur desire worked into a different fic.

Billy kind of remembers crashing on the couch last night. Went out earlier than he normally does but that's what happens when you chase a double dose of Vikes with a beer or four. Nobody bothered to wake him up. Just as well, not like he has anywhere to be.

Couldn't leave even if he did have somewhere to be. He crashed the Camaro a week and a half ago. As luck would have it, Billy got more banged up than the car but Neil still decided he was irresponsible and took possession of his keys until further notice.

As he sits up and brushes his fringe out of his face with his good hand, something catches his eye. While Billy only half remembers crashing on the couch, he definitely remembers the cast on his right arm was blue when he did. Black would've been Billy's first choice, except they were running low on colors and completely out of several, including black, so he settled on the darker of the two blue shades. His cast was blue. Plain, solid dark blue.

Now it's anything but. Weird white blobs and yellow and red splotches stand out stark against the cobalt backdrop of his encased forearm. For a moment he just gapes.

"Fucking— damn it, Maxine!" he shouts, snapping to his feet and marching down to her room.

She's not there. Billy growls and searches around some more. Neil's truck is gone. Susan's refilling the bird feeder in the backyard. Max is out front, crouched on the sidewalk and trying to coax the neighborhood stray cat over.

Billy forcefully swings the front door open and hustles her way,

spooking the stray. The tabby's ears press flat as it turns tail and takes off.

"Hey!" Max snaps. "What's the big idea, asshole? It was gonna come up to me this time!"

"Fuck the stupid cat, what'd you do to my arm?" Billy furiously jabs his finger at all the strange shapes.

"Uh, I improved it?" Max rises and brushes her palms off on her denim capris. "It was boring before. Now you have flames and skulls. You're welcome."

"What the— these are supposed to be flames?" Billy scoffs. "They look like lumpy fish!"

Max looks scandalized, mouth dropping and eyes narrowing.

"And your skulls look like mushrooms! Even if you were a good artist, which you're clearly not, you couldn't even ask me?"

"I was going to ask you," she insists, tossing her hands up. "But you were already out! You conked out after the evening news like some old geezer."

"You could've woke me up!"

"But I would've felt bad! You were totally dead to the world, I mean, come on, you were snoring!"

Billy pinches the bridge of his nose, ire rumbling in his throat.

"I'm sorry," Max says more quietly, tugging at her copper ponytail. "I just wanted to do something nice."

"You're a shitty painter," Billy grouses, dropping his hand as he glares.

"No, your cast is just a shitty canvas," she huffs. "I didn't realize how rough the texture was gonna be. People sign them all the time on tv...I thought you'd like skulls better than signatures."

Max frowns and actually looks a tad put out. It seems like she really did mean well. Like she's hurt it didn't turn out the way she thought. Billy grinds his teeth to refrain from further yelling. Inhales deeply through his nose. He slugs her in the shoulder in lieu of screaming in her face.

"Ow! Jerk!" Max slugs him right back but she's shorter than he is and evidently his shoulder is out of her convenient range.

Her hit lands right above where the cast starts and shooting pains jolt beneath it, right down to his fingertips. Billy tries not to let it on but maybe his face does something anyway, or she catches something in the way he exhales, because Max's eyes widen.

"Oh, crap! Sorry, Billy. I didn't realize it still hurt."

It doesn't really. Not like it did before. The first couple days when it was too swollen for more than a splint ached something awful. But there's not much pain now. Unless he accidentally bangs into something. Or forgets and picks up some object maybe a little too heavy or too awkward for him to manage with a limited grip. Or gets punched by his little sister, apparently. Ugh, this fucking sucks.

"Whatever. I'm not gonna walk around with your weird mushroom skulls or your stupid lumpy fish flames for the next four weeks."

Billy ignores the hurt on Max's face and flips her the bird before pivoting on his heel. Ducking into the garage, he's already decided he's going to take the cast off. He's not stupid, he knows he'll have to get another one on. He isn't the Wolverine, his arm's still broken. But like, maybe he can enjoy the freedom for an hour or two. Actually scratch that infuriating recurrent itch that never really goes away, but hides here and there, or fades into forgettable when he's riding on pain pills. Actually take a shower without having to duct tape a goddamn trash bag around his limb.

Billy peers around the various tools and sharp objects at his disposal. Gotta give it to Neil, he actually keeps everything pretty organized. Susan's gardening tools and supplies are all on one side of the garage. Neil has his hardware and utility stuff on the opposite side, arranged neatly on his work bench. A few saws and axes are mounted on the

wall. Billy has no idea why they need a felling axe when the only trees in the yard are skinnier than Max. Billy doesn't know why they need a chainsaw either, given the same lack of limber. Nonetheless, he briefly considers using that.

Nah. Too dangerous.

He eventually settles on Neil's sharp box cutter and a pair of pliers. Extends the blade until its long enough to be functional and seats himself atop Neil's pleather stool. Billy rests his arm so the meaty part he can definitely manage a mean hammer-fist with when his knuckles are split to shit is on the bottom, separated from the wood only by the cast itself. He takes the box cutter to the small ring of padding that starts under his elbow and begins.

The padding goes easy. It gets tougher once the blade actually meets the harder, stiffer blue material. Billy isn't giving up though. If it takes awhile, so be it. It's embarrassing enough that he got the Camaro taken away and that he'll be spending the next month in a stupid cast at all. He's definitely not going to walk around with his stepsister's amateur attempt at acrylics too.

Billy's probably about twenty minutes into the job when Susan comes into the garage through the side door. She does a double take at the sight of him. Blinks rapidly as if she got too bright a glimpse of sunlight.

"Uh...you're, um. Billy, you're sawing your cast off with a b-box cutter?"

"Gee, aren't you observant." Billy rolls his eyes, doesn't even pause in his task.

"Uhm. Okay...are you sure that's a good idea?"

Billy would've heard if Neil pulled in the driveway. He didn't, so that means he's not home yet, and Billy can get away with snarking at his stupid stepmother.

"You wouldn't know a good idea if it jumped up and bit you in the ass, Susan." He continues sawing all the more vigorously just to spite

her.

Sure enough, she doesn't bug him with another word about it. She grabs a small gardening spade and trots back the way she came.

Billy continues sawing away, razor box cutter blade slowly but surely making its way through thick padding and layer after layer of hardened casting tape. At some point he does hear Neil's truck pull up, muffled but unmistakable through the garage door. He gives a short pause, uncertain. His father might not like Billy messing with his stuff, getting his hands over his tools and making a mess on the workbench.

But the garage door doesn't open. That means Neil must be headed inside through the front door. Okay, cool.

Billy's almost done. If he can fully split this side, he'll be able to use the pliers to get it off. Then he can clean everything up before his father sees and makes a fuss.

He's halfway through the encasement around his wrist now. He's almost there, grits his teeth in determination and tightens his grip. Adds a little more pressure and— oh shit, maybe too much pressure.

He shifts the cutter too hard too fast and feels the blade slice into his skin. Red spills into the ruined cotton padding between the strips of sundered cobalt cast. It sears hot but he's too close now. Billy can deal, far from the first time he's been cut. He ignores the fresh pain and makes it to the end, shearing through the last of the stubborn threads until it's fully split down the side.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Billy pries the mangled, cumbersome cast off with the pliers and sweeps it all into the trash can Neil keeps under the bench. Finally freed, his arm feels uncomfortable and kinda weak, so he scratches more gently than planned on...it's also still bleeding.

Billy cut himself pretty good. There's about a three inch slice in the flesh along the side of his wrist. It's deep enough that he can see the salmon meat below the skin. Shit. He's also bleeding onto the workbench.

Billy swallows and gets up, goes for the microfiber towels Neil keeps for washing their vehicles. A couple of them are dark maroon, Billy figures he can use them to mop up the blood. It's still wet, so if he gets it now, his father will never know a thing.

Billy bundles a towel in his good hand and just as he's about to blot, the side door opens. It isn't Susan this time. Neil steps down into the garage, takes one look at Billy, and gapes.

"What the hell are you doing!?"

"Dad, I know this looks bad, but—"

"You're bleeding everywhere! Jesus, fuck, where is your head these days?!"

Billy holds his ground and his tongue as Neil stomps over. He rips the towel out of Billy's hand and gruffly wraps it around his wound. He's too rough and the force unleashes more of those shooting pains Billy's really freaking sick of.

"Goddamnit, Billy. I just got home, now I gotta run you to ER?"

"It wasn't all my fault. Max thinks she's Picasso!"

"I don't want to hear it!" Neil snaps. "Get in the truck!"

Billy obediently makes his way to the truck. Climbs into the passenger's seat. Keeps his pain to himself as he holds the towel around his bleeding arm. Sure enough, you can't actually see the blood through the maroon. He sees it on his fingers though, if he peels them off, splays them away from the damp microfiber.

Neil returns, keys in hand. Hops into the driver's seat.

"I just don't get it," he declares as he starts the engine. "Why are you a moron?"

Billy licks his teeth and leans his head back against the seat.

"I raised you to be a man, not a moron."

And Neil's already aggravated so the smart thing to do would be to keep his trap shut, but sometimes Billy just can't help himself.

"Are you sure?"

Neil stares at him steely, sidelong. He isn't going to hit Billy when they're about to be in the emergency room for the second time in less than two weeks. Doesn't necessarily mean Billy's in the clear though. His father will tally the snide remark, add it to the never ending list of Billy's sins. Billy can't get away with anything, Neil always keeps score.

The rest of the drive is uneventful. Neil plays nice for all the hospital staff. Offers polite nods and smiles to every nurse and makes small talk with the one who stitches Billy up.

Neil is annoyed and Billy is probably going to have a new scar. He doesn't regret his choice to saw the cast off though...at least not until the moment the doctor begins unraveling a roll of neon pink casting tape.

"I didn't pick that," he barks, glaring vehemently at the vibrant magenta that definitely belongs to some Strawberry Shortcake obsessed little girl and nowhere near him at all.

"I'm sorry, young man. Our supplier is late this month. It's the only color we have left."

Neil doesn't look any more enthused by this than Billy. Billy isn't sure which is worse. That he's actually going to be stuck in a flamboyant flamingo of a cast, or that his father is here to witness the plan that was supposed to save him from more embarrassment completely backfire in his face.

"Happy now?" Neil asks him once they're back in the truck. "Went through all that trouble and for what? Everybody's gonna see this and think you're a sissy."

Billy groans and rests his temple against the window. He should've asked for a pain pill while they were inside. In addition to their more obvious uses, pain pills always seem to make his father more

bearable.

"There's gonna be hell to pay if you dulled my blade. They don't make utility knives like that any more, William. I'm not gonna be a happy camper if you ruined mine during your latest tryout for the Retard Olympics."

"It's fine." Billy blinks slowly. "Still sharp. Don't believe me, ask my stitches."

"Hm."

They don't talk anymore until they get home. Dinner is pizza, which Billy is grateful for because it's finger food and he can inhale three slices in under five minutes. Doesn't have to fumble his way around silverware or give anyone any more time to gawk at the practically glowing pink cast. Max does an awful job of stifling her laughter but shuts up once Billy gives her a piercing death glare.

But after dinner she barges right into his room. She must've gotten her courage back. Billy grabs a pillow to chuck at her head but the laughter he's anticipating doesn't come. Max steps over the threshold, paintbrush in one hand, sizable bottle of black acrylic paint in the other.

"No pictures this time," she promises. "I'll just paint it all black. How does that sound?"

Billy cracks a grateful grin and flashes her a thumb's up.